



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JANUARY 7, 2004

CONTACT: MICHELLE MOWERY JOHNSON

(615) 313-4707 / OFFICE

(615) 424-0544 / CELL OR

BETH DENTON

(615) 251-5131 / OFFICE

(888) 220-4791 / PAGER

CHILD CARE VANS PUT TO THE TEST ACROSS TENNESSEE

DEPARTMENTS OF SAFETY AND HUMAN SERVICES BEGIN ENFORCING NEW LAW

MEMPHIS, Tenn., --- The Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS) announced that a new safety regulation aimed at keeping Tennessee children safe during the ride to and from child care centers begins today. The new law requires all DHS licensed child care centers operating vehicles that carry 10 or more passengers to pass a vehicle safety inspection. Vehicles from several Shelby County child care centers were inspected in Memphis today, and all of them passed.

"This new law is one more layer of protection for Tennessee children in child care," said DHS Assistant Commissioner for Adult and Family Services Glenda Shearon. "Transportation can be a risky venture, but we know many families rely on centers to perform this service. Beginning today, it is a safer endeavor."

Inspectors with the Tennessee Department of Safety's (DOS) Pupil Transportation division will inspect nearly 2,000 child care vans and buses across the state annually to ensure compliance with the new state standard.

"With thousands of children riding in child care vans and buses every day, it is essential the vehicles transporting them operate properly," said Department of Safety Commissioner Fred Phillips. "We are pleased to work with DHS to ensure compliance with the new safety standards."

The new regulation comes as a result of the Emergency Transportation Act passed by the General Assembly last year. The law took effect January 1. Qualifying vehicles must meet higher safety standards than were previously required.

DOS Inspectors will conduct a thorough check of the child care vehicles to determine whether or not it meets the stringent safety requirements. The inspection process includes a review of mechanical equipment and restraint systems, as well as the structural condition of the vehicle. Vehicles that do not meet the safety standards will be reported to DHS. Those with serious mechanical deficiencies will be immediately prohibited from carrying children.

###

CITIZENS PLAZA, 15TH FLOOR
400 DEADERICK STREET
NASHVILLE, TN 37248
615.313.4700